

REENTRY PACKET

Your Customized Guide to Support your Successful Transition



National Web-based Reentry Resource Center

www.fairshake.net

Table of Contents

Website

Reentry Packet Cover Page
Quick Start Guide!

Employment

Resume Examples

General Support Pages

Myth-Busters

Articles




How Do You Solve A Problem Like Reentry? All About Mentoring

Resource Directory

WELCOME TO FAIR SHAKE! ➔ www.fairshake.net

PRINT THIS PAGE to guide you as you explore the Fair Shake Do-It-Yourself Reentry Resource Center. There is a lot of information on the website! This guide will help you get find your way around.

3 important items for you to remember:

1. If you ever get lost on the website (or any website), click on the logo to return to the home page.
2. Words in blue are links to pages on our website, other websites or documents that you can also print.
3. Icons you will see:
 -  Available off-line and on-line
 -  Available on-line only
 -  Documents available off-line and on-line



➤ [Resource Directory](#)
➤ [Resource Directory](#)

Fair Shake Website Home Page: ➔ www.fairshake.net



Do It Yourself!

- You are unique! No one knows what you need better than you do
- Explore new opportunities!
- No tracking, nudging, or monitoring



Fair Shake Reentry Tool Kit

- [Resource Directory](#)
- [Reentry Packet](#)
- [Ownership Manual](#)
- [Building Computer Skills](#)
- [Find a Job](#)
- [Become a Member!](#)
- [Educate Yourself!](#)

Find RESOURCES:

Resource Directory – search our huge data base!
Resource Guides – local, regional, and national brochures, books, and interactive websites

Find EMPLOYMENT

Prepare For Work
Find A Job (also includes Start Your Own Business)
Help an Employer Hire You!

Explore LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Formal, Informal, Non-formal
Higher Ed, Life Skills, Lifelong Learning

And Improve COMPUTER SKILLS!

Step-by-Step Tutorials and Internet Safety Tips

SEARCH the entire Fair Shake WEBSITE

It is like a REENTRY, DEVELOPMENT and COMMUNITY-BUILDING LIBRARY!

You can find all the pages on our website from almost any location on our website! By hovering over the four menu tabs on the left side of our home page, you will activate the menu bar to reveal links to pages organized under headings.

STEP BY STEP:

Look to the left side of any page and you will see a dark purple column. Do you see the words: Reentry Resources, Information Center, Member Menu and About Fair Shake? Hover your cursor (don't click) over the words Reentry Resources at the top of the column. To 'hover', move the cursor – which usually looks like an arrow – over a tab. You will see the cursor switch to the image of a hand. The Menu Title will then change to light-purple and the Menu will appear to the right. Next, you can move your cursor over the words in the menu. Hover over any of the titles and the color will change to orange and a line will be added underneath. Click on the title that interests you, and you will go to that page on the website.



Most websites work like Fair Shake:

- Click on the logo to return to the home page
- Find the sitemap at the bottom of almost every page
- Words that change color are often links
- Learn about an organization's Mission and Vision by visiting the "About Us" page.

Found at the bottom of each webpage, the Sitemap also shows all of the pages on the website:

Home / Sitemap / Privacy Policy / Help / Contact Us / Back to Top

ASA J. PETERS

1514 Campbell, D1 Jefferson City, Missouri 64108
(816) 667-0421 (816) 992-1421

AREAS OF RELEVANT SKILL

Multi-dimensional individual with experience as **heavy equipment operator, driver, or laborer** with technical knowledge in surveying, welding, and general maintenance. Excellent safety record and willingness to do more than what is expected. Communicate and interact effectively with diverse cultures.

- **Heavy Equipment Operations:** Forklift, Tractor, Loader, Backhoe, Motor Grader, Track Loader, Bulldozer, Bobcat Skid/Steer Loader, Scraper
- **Driver:** Dump Truck, Over-the-Road
- **Technical:** Surveying, Welding
- **Maintenance:** General, Preventative, Carpentry, Painting

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

Linn State Technical College

Heavy Equipment Operator Certificate Course

Welding; Blueprint Interpretation; Surveying; Preventative Maintenance

American Truck Driving School

Over-the-Road Truck Driving Certificate Course

Northwest Missouri Community College

Introduction to Computer Information Systems; Basic Programming; Data Files; Structural Programming; Microcomputer Operating Systems

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

TEMPORARY ASSIGNMENTS, Jefferson City & Cameron, MO

- Store Clerk/Stocker
- Library Clerk/Data Entry Clerk
- Computer Operator/Data Entry Clerk
- Chapel Head Clerk
- AM/PM Baker/Store Clerk

LINN TECHNICAL COLLEGE, Linn, MO

- Maintenance Technician – General maintenance, cleaning, carpentry, and lawn care.

SPRINGFIELD PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT, Springfield, MO

- Laborer, Park Maintenance

MAZZIO'S PIZZA, Springfield, MO

- Delivery Driver

DRIVEWAY PAVING, Toledo, OH

- Dump Truck Driver/Laborer

NORTH AMERICAN VAN LINES, Ft. Wayne, IN

- Over-The-Road Driver

This resume example created by and for *Expert Résumé's for People Returning to Work*

Wendy S. Enelow and Louise M. Kursmark
2003 JIST Publishing Inc. Indianapolis, IN

ARTHUR F. ECK, JR.

639 Arcadia Street Rochester, NY 12239
387-458-3241

OBJECTIVE

BREAKFAST and LUNCH COOK

To assist a restaurant in attracting and retaining a strong customer base,
by applying a passion for the culinary arts and a strong work ethic.

PERSONAL PROFILE

- Experience working in a kitchen environment, filling orders and developing menu items.
- Ability to get the job done by employing critical thinking and problem resolution skills.
- Work well as a team player and independently with very little supervision.
- Received commendations for being dependable and hardworking.
- Bilingual, Spanish and English.

COOKING SKILLS

- ✓ Prepared a selection of entrees, vegetables, desserts, and refreshments.
- ✓ Cleaned the grill, food preparation surfaces, counters, and floors.
- ✓ Met high quality standards for food preparation, service, and safety.
- ✓ Trained and supervised workers.
- ✓ Maintained inventory logs and placed orders to replenish stocks of tableware, linens, paper, cleaning supplies, cooking utensils, food, and beverages.
- ✓ Received and checked the content of deliveries and evaluated the quality of meats, poultry, fish, vegetables, and baked goods.
- ✓ Oversaw food preparation and cooking.

RESTAURANT EXPERIENCE

Kitchen Worker – State of New York (Coxsackie Correctional Facility); Coxsackie, NY

Short Order Cook – Rockies Breakfast Bar; Rochester, NY

Prep Cook/Laborer – New World Diner; Rochester, NY

Lunch and Dinner Cook – Albany's Italian American Restaurant; Albany, NY

MILITARY SERVICE

U.S. Navy – Machinist Mate E-3 – *Honorable Discharge*
GED obtained

Fair Shake's

MYTH-BUSTERS



Myth: FALSE DICHOTOMIES – The idea that you must choose between two options: Yes or No. Good or Bad. Right or Wrong. Candidate A or B. Rise or Fall. With Us or Against Us. Science vs Religion. Rational vs. Emotional. Individual vs. Group. and one that I've heard a lot in my life: "That's a man's (sport, job, perspective); it's not for women". (a form of yes or no) Whenever you need to make a choice, see if you can find 4, 5, or even 10 options!



Myth: WE STOP LEARNING – If I had never touched a flame before I turned 58 years old, I would learn to never touch one in the future if I touched one today. We acquire information constantly and we organize it into meaning. We may even care enough to find out how what we learned relates to what we already know and believe. One thing school failed to teach us is how to learn, and how to discern what we learn. The 'information sources' today are louder, strangely influential, and grossly incomplete. To get the full picture, we have to dig for information and ask good questions, while also trying to avoid getting overwhelmed or trapped. We must keep learning, and as we learn, we can learn to live together better! We do not have to accept limitations or acceptable levels of suffering. We are NOT STUCK. We can learn...and then change...whatever we want. "There is no inevitability as long as there is a willingness to contemplate what is happening." - Marshall McLuhan (author of The Medium is the Message)



Myth: MERITOCRACY - The more you learn the more you earn', 'you can make it if you try', 'pull yourself up', etc. Many ways to reinforce the idea that the people who have the money and the stuff are successful because they earned what they have, they got all their money through hard work and a shrewd (including a 100% respectful, environmentally-sound and firearms-free!) investment strategy. If only. Investing is almost never in line with our humanity values...yet it is always in our best interest to invest in humanity. Meritocracy is justified stratification; people above others for their achievements. Michael Sandel said: "We've slid into the assumption that the money people make is the measure of their contribution to the common good." I wonder how the merit idea would work if we increase accolades and 'status' based on care about others?



Myth: INCARCERATION PAYS A 'DEBT TO SOCIETY' - Why do we keep repeating this? Members of society believe that incarceration and the judicial system costs them money; they do not feel that they have been paid in any way. How could they? The only debt that has been paid is the one requested and required by a heartless and hungry punitive system. Society has little faith that 'the system' is providing the information necessary to reengage successfully. Together, we can change this. The 'justice system' is the only group getting paid.



Myth: WE ARE FRAGILE - The "Helping" Industry relies on us being weak. ACE (Adverse Childhood Experiences) scores may describe some aspects of people, but they in no way represent who we are. Many of us with high ACE scores have also become even more than resilient, we are now anti-fragile because of our challenges. This means that the adverse conditions made us stronger than we would have been without them.



Myth: TV NEWS INFORMS YOU OF WHAT IS GOING ON All you get from any single news source is what they want you to see and believe. What they show us is what their sponsors want them to show us. Sponsors demand support, so the advertisements determine the 'news' you'll see on TV. Social Media cannot be counted on to inform us of anything but an opinion. To get more pieces of the whole story, we must consider information offered by many news sources.



Myth: WE NEED AUTHORITY AND MONEY TO 'FIX' OUR CHALLENGES - Why would we ask the institutions, and the people who are complicit in maintaining them, to fix the problems they created? Winona LaDuke says: "You shouldn't let your dealer tell you what you need." Are we frustrated enough yet to work on the solutions together? We've been trained to believe these myths:

- Experts and 'science' have the solutions to our challenges; they will provide the relief for our suffering. Q: What if they are the cause of our suffering?
- Money will fix our problems. Does money build trust, cooperation and feelings of confidence? We have gifts to share with each other. Our focus on money continues to take away our power. Money does not give us power. Feelings of agency, support and capability give us power!



Myth: INDIVIDUALISM – Individualism is said to be a “fundamental American principle” so is authoritarianism, lying, stealing, false superiority and also the myth of the 'self-made' person and "united we stand".

INTERDEPENDENCE, on the other hand, is a fundamental planetary principle. We can easily see our impact on the environment and on each other because of our insatiable pursuit of more stuff; a belief created to fill the hole created by 'individualism'. The Rev. Desmond Tutu reminded us that "the solitary individual" is a contradiction in terms.



Myth: "FREE-MARKET CAPITALISM" - You'll find that file between Easter Bunny and Santa Clause. The game is rigged. Capitalism offers some opportunity, but 'the market' does not **respond to our needs**. Instead, it manufactures our desires and externalizes unhealthy costs.



Myth: NOTHING WORKS: Roger Martinson wrote, "the represent array of correctional treatments has no appreciable effect - positive or negative - on rates of recidivism of convicted offenders." In the magazine Public Interest (1974), he stated, "rehabilitative efforts that have been reported so far have no appreciable effect on recidivism." The way that I read this is: the ineffective 'programs' supplied by the prisons (or whomever else) did not impact the already low (compared to today) recidivism rate. He said that no single thing works because we are unique. We are not robots. One thing that always works is 100% pro-social: it's us working together!



EMPLOYMENT AND EDUCATION REDUCE RECIDIVISM Only YOU "reduce recidivism". You and nothing else. It is up to you to utilize education or employment opportunities to support your reentry success; YOU get full credit for how you apply your gifts. After all, employment and higher education did not keep Jeff Skilling, Bernie Madoff, Martha Stewart, Bill Cosby, Charles Kushner, or several elected representatives, out of prison.



CRIMINOGENIC NEEDS Incarcerated people have basic human needs; the same needs we all have. You are not different. This is yet another attempt to scientize othering.



Myth: EXPERTS KNOW WHAT'S BEST

Experts have agendas. Always consider who is paying the 'expert'. Non-profit status does not automatically indicate integrity. Professional 'fixers' are often poor listeners. Prisons, schools and hospitals tell us what we need, they rarely ask what we think or feel. How can they 'help' if they don't hear? We can learn to listen to ourselves and each other by asking questions. We can work, care, and grow together to build our capacity for complexity, cooperation, constructive learning, critical thinking, and agency! We are the 'experts' we've been waiting for.

How Do You Solve a Problem Like Reentry?

Sue Kastensen, Founder and Director, Fair Shake

Imagine, if you can, being snugly stuck in a building with 1,600 other people, all of whom share your physical gender; never leaving, eating in the cafeteria that offers no choices, and sleeping in a room that is the size of your current bathroom, which, by the way, you share with one or two “roommates” not of your choosing. Imagine, also, that you have no internet access, no cell phone, and no computer. Your phone calls, on an old-school pay phone, will be conducted in a large room filled with boisterous people. You are restricted to one 15-minute call after which you must wait one hour before you are permitted to make another. Finally, you are only offered short intervals of time in the exercise room and library, and you receive few, if any, very short visits from family or friends. Oh, and you’ll share the bathroom with 50 people.

Can you imagine this for even one full day? How about one week? A month? A year? People in U.S. prisons are serving sentences that exceed 1 year ... so let’s imagine five, 10, 20 or even 30 years.

The crowded picture in your head, however, doesn’t come close to the reality of life in prison. I have omitted the suffering, the sadness, and the loss of loved ones; the manipulations, the disrespect, and lack of trust; the fear, the censorship, and the razor-wire fence. And the heavy gates with electronic locks.

Today there is an added threat of a potentially deadly virus running wild within the building. The virus, by the way, can only enter the building with the people who come and go for work, but who do not live there.

Finally, I want you to imagine how anyone who does not have personal experience in this process could possibly

guide people to build successful lives in a busy world once the exit door is opened to them. Where does one start to offer information about an ever-changing society when it is difficult to keep up, even for those who are fully engaged?

At least one building, full of the people in the thought exercise, opens its doors to release the inhabitants each day; 7 days per week (Carson, 2020). There are approximately 1.4 million prisoners currently serving time in state and federal prisons (Carson, 2020), and 95% of them will be returning to society (Hughes & Wilson, 2020). They are all excited to experience freedom again, but many are also extremely fearful of failure.

Very few prisons offer resources, support, or information to the incarcerated that will help them make vital connections for housing, medical support, or clothing prior to release. No prisons allow those who have recently come home to share their experience with those who are preparing for the transition.

Incarcerated people, when they can work, make less than 30 cents per hour, on average (Sawyer, 2017). It’s nearly impossible to save up for today’s cost of living on that wage, and the difficulty is exacerbated when landlords or employers refuse to consider leasing to or hiring formerly incarcerated applicants after running a background check.

With such a steep hill to climb, it should come as no surprise that less than 10 years after release from prison, 83% of those who have been released will find themselves back in prison (Alper, Durose, & Markman, 2018).



Photo credit: Federal Bureau of Prisons

Sue Kastensen presenting Fair Shake in a federal prison.

But it is a surprise. It’s shocking. A 17% success rate for an organization of any kind is ridiculous! How is this even possible? It’s embarrassing, unacceptable, maddening, and, for me, motivating.

Minding My Own Business

Prior to 1999, I — like most of my fellow Americans — was not aware of the formidable and terrifying gauntlet of challenges waiting for those who are returning to society from prison.

I was also not aware of the extremely long sentences and collateral consequences imposed by our war on drugs, or that people convicted of committing burglary were much more likely to commit another crime than people convicted of committing murder, or that many people convicted of sex offenses would be listed on a national registry for the rest of their lives.

I had never thought about the psychological hurdles to reengagement: building the courage and confidence to apply for a job, the frustrations of learning to use technology, needing strong boundaries to resist the

lure of using shortcuts to acquire money, finding and building healthy relationships (including reconnecting with children, parents and partners); or the intense tenacity and dedication to stay committed to goals made while incarcerated.

I never thought about any of that because in 1999, I — like most Americans — was focused on myself and my future. I was an enthusiastic 36-year-old business owner, manufacturing products that were in high demand in a rapidly growing market. I needed machines, and the employees to build and run them. Amid the growth and excitement, an employee took me aside one day and quietly asked if I might consider hiring her friend who would be coming home from prison soon.

Entrepreneurs are often courageous to try new and different things, but this question put me in a difficult position. I wanted to protect the loyal team that was cranking out our products every day, and I also wanted to give this person a “second chance.” Besides, if I did not say I’d consider this question in my small community of 2,000 people, who do I think should?

I said “yes.”

I learned a lot about reentry challenges from Rick, the applicant who became our new employee. He and I continued our conversation while I brainstormed on building a tool that could help people find needed resources. I knew that, at the very least, I could contribute an online reentry resource library! I called it “Fair Shake.”

Wanting to connect with professionals who help prisoners prepare for release, in 2002 I joined the Correctional Education Association and started searching for a mentor. I found one, and by 2005, I had sold my business, eager to create a nonprofit that would help people transition from prison to life after prison.

Unique Qualifications

Since before I can remember, I have been a risk-tolerant, extremely curious, self-determined, anti-fragile, and somewhat courageous individual. My approach to life did not bode well with authorities and by 8th grade, I felt I was being developmentally stunted at home and in school. In order to survive my teens, I had to find my own path.

After getting kicked out of my parents’ home at 13 — and after five high schools, four foster homes, several stays in group homes, a couple of jail visits and a few years in a Catholic reform school — in 1979, when I was 16 years old, I wanted to drop out of school and become an emancipated adult. I felt I was serving a sentence that had no end and no purpose. Authorities wanted me to stay in school, so I said I would continue with high school if I could attend Walden III, an alternative high school (which still exists today).¹ This was my last opportunity for a formal education and, thankfully, I flourished.

The school engaged in very little top-down pedagogy and primarily worked from a framework of student-centered, constructive, and problem-solving perspectives. Even the students were teaching classes! Some of my most cherished and important lessons were not taught in the classrooms; they were felt within the care of the community, for which I had yearned for so many years. The comradery, respect, interactions, support, and cooperative learning — unheard of in public or private schools in 1979 — gave me a deep understanding of authenticity, freedom, ownership, agency, interdependence, and even the importance of history.

At the start of my junior year, I detested school but at the end of the year, I found myself deeply in love with learning. I know now that we can find this love no matter where, or when, we find ourselves.

Lifewide Learning

Between selling my business and organizing a nonprofit, I worked in fair trade for a few years. During that time, I learned about stakeholders in the food chain: the farmworkers, farmers, processors, distributors, retailers, and consumers (we did not include the waste process at that time). My mind opened; I realized that the onus for reentry success did not solely fall on the person coming home from prison — that person also needed to be accepted for employment, housing, higher education, in places of worship, and more. In short, their success depended on all of us! I realized that I had to offer support to other stakeholders, too. I started thinking about ways to support and encourage family and friends, employers, landlords, corrections, and citizens to participate in this common goal for reintegration.

By creating, and listening, and creating some more, amazing things started to happen.

In 2014, I received a call from a reentry affairs coordinator in a federal prison in Colorado. She contacted me because the resource-selection tool on the Fair Shake website² was not working properly. After we talked for some time, she invited me to present Fair Shake at the prison complex. She said I would speak with hundreds of men in institutions that covered three levels of security. This would be my first opportunity to present Fair Shake to the incarcerated!

After I nervously introduced myself and provided an overview of Fair Shake, I asked the group if they would tell me what information and resources they were looking for that would help them find success after release. Once we started talking, I relaxed and they, too, became increasingly comfortable with our conversation. By the end of the presentation, I felt like we had an energizing reentry brainstorming session!

In addition to gaining insight from the responses to my question, I also discovered that most of the people in that room were corresponding with family and friends through a secure email server called CorrLinks and that I could continue to communicate with them through that service by creating a newsletter and sharing best practices.

I also learned an even more important lesson: A lot of incarcerated people go to great lengths to help one another.

In early 2016, I started writing a monthly newsletter and by the end of the year, 250 readers had signed on. (Today there are more than 4,000 subscribers.) It is not a broadcast newsletter, either. It is a place to share and build ideas. The readers know more than I do, so we advise and inform one another.

Once that door was opened, I committed myself to spend as much time as I could to engage in in-person conversations with incarcerated people. For the next three years, I traveled all around the country: north to south and coast to coast, presenting Fair Shake in many types of prisons and all levels of security.

For each trip, I created a route that put me on the road for up to one month. I had to drive to the institutions because it made no sense to fly. Prisons are mostly located far away from airports and amenities and can get locked down without notice. I learned to be very flexible!

When I would arrive at an institution where the myriad of presentation participants — incarcerated people, prison staff, and public servant visitors — had seen the Fair Shake Reentry Packet,³ or the free Fair Shake software application or even the website (in a staff office; prisoners do not have access to the internet), someone would inevitably ask me how my bubble truck⁴ was running and if I had new stories from meeting people along the way (I always did).



Sue Kastensen with her bubble truck.

My truck, with a camper on the back, made my travels possible. It was vital to have my kitchen, office, and bedroom with me at all times.

My travels are on hold for now, but prison reentry and education staff around the country have been staying in touch. Some check-in to make sure I will still be coming to their institutions when they open their doors again to volunteers, and others contact me to ask when the new software will be released. Robert Cialdini's (1984) "Scarcity Principle" is working in my favor, and suddenly Fair Shake is in high demand!

So, who comes to the presentations, and who signs up for the newsletters?

One can make almost no assumptions at all about who is in prison. As you have likely seen in the news, lawyers, CEOs, entertainers, and elected officials can be found in prisons; along with mothers, fathers, young people, and elders — many of whom have been in prison most of their lives and may have entered prison before they turned 18. The people serving time inside prison are as diverse as the people outside of prison, and many who have been convicted of committing crimes have also been victims themselves.

Criminologists, correctional administrators, elected officials, many academics, and, of course, the media, attempt to impress upon us that there is a specific type of person who commits a crime. They want us to believe that this "type" has "needs" that are unlike our usual human needs and they call them "criminogenic needs." They believe that these needs are like an addiction

and that most people who commit a crime must vigilantly "desist" from crime for many years, and possibly the rest of their lives because the needs are so strong. These people are put into groups according to their "risk of recidivism," their propensity to commit a new crime and return to prison.

To ensure that most prisoners from powerful and influential backgrounds will not be included in medium- or high-risk groups, the criminologists have devised a way for the majority of white-collar criminals to be excluded from having these "needs" (e.g., Jeffrey Epstein, Martha Stewart). The high-profile prisoners can often skip the dehumanizing, behaviorism-based programming and lengthy stretches of time in higher security prisons, where "assigning low-risk offenders to intensive programs designed for high-risk offenders" ... "can make things worse," according to the National Institute of Justice (2012, p. 109).

Considering the amount of time, effort, money, and research invested, I find it very disappointing that the criminologists have not created instruments that allow them to observe how people change. Many people grow, learn, feel deep remorse, and develop a world view that will lead to a law-abiding life, even without programming.

It is no wonder people are mystified about corrections, reentry, and how they can get involved to improve the corrections system or support the lives of those who have been released. National corrections associations, academics and elected representatives — the self-proclaimed "experts" — discourage others from getting involved in attending to the "broken system," as President Obama referred to it. They want us to trust them and leave the "reform" to them. After all, they will assert, they are informed by "evidence."⁵

These experts have been asking the question "What works?" to reduce recidivism for 50 years. In 1974, Robert Martinson answered their question.

After visiting many prisons and looking at the programming available in each one, he concluded that not one program worked for everyone. He found that some people benefited from one type, and others benefited from another, but no perfect program that applies to all had been created; there was no silver bullet. His findings liberated corrections from their duty of rehabilitation, creating a gap for the criminologists, with their medical model of interventions, dosages, and programming, to step in.

After more than 20 years of their studies, “evidence” and best practices, the criminogenic approach has only increased recidivism and failed to address the issues that it accuses the incarcerated population of engaging in in the first place: anti-social thinking and behavior. (See the Criminogenic Need Factors chart [National Parole Resource Center, 2014].)

have the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge of, and commitment to, them! In fact, many of our incarcerated have become far more prosocial than the people who determine them to be a high-risk for recidivism.

What You Focus on Grows

Since I have been presenting in several institutions annually, the prisons that have reentry councils, or think tanks, or other groups dedicated to problem-solving, often invite me to join their groups for an hour or two of conversation after my presentation. Over the course of a few meetings, we gain a deeper understanding of the unique qualities that each of us brings separately — and together — to the solution of the reentry problem.

It was through one of these opportunities that I was able to create a workshop for a National Conference on

It was a crazy idea that was fairly difficult to execute but we pulled it off. We were even able to include recorded presentations by Mike, the incarcerated member, and also the voices of the Fair Shake newsletter subscribers who shared their thoughts in writing.

The conference organizers greatly underestimated the interest in this topic: they gave us a small room for our presentation that we filled to more than 250% of capacity, while we had to watch many interested attendees walk away. Unfortunately, like so many things, the conference has been canceled this year, so we will not be able to rekindle and continue the conversation in person. The idea, however, will persist.

The Fair Shake Operating System

Creating a web and technology-based prisoner-reentry nonprofit organization that serves millions of people, on-demand, is a huge undertaking.

Many of my toughest lessons were learned simply by deciding to take this on! I had to learn to manage the daily website development by myself, to communicate with several stakeholders using a variety of tools, and to grasp several software tricks and tools involving Office, Adobe and Windows OS. And I have to keep on learning those tricks and tools, too, because software makers often change them when they update.

It was during one of these updates that I became very frustrated. I felt that no matter how hard I tried to keep up, Microsoft et al., were not interested in having me get my work done, they were mainly interested in making me learn things that served their interests. I felt like I was working for them!

My son calmly offered me an alternative to the commercial “matrix.” He asked me to consider learning to use an operating system called Ubuntu, which was constantly and seamlessly updated and improved by developers who ask for input from the users. He said it

Antisocial attitudes, beliefs and values	Attitudes, values, beliefs, and rationalizations supportive of crime; cognitive emotional states of anger, resentment, and defiance
Antisocial behavior patterns	Early and continuing involvement in a number and variety of antisocial acts and a variety of settings
Antisocial peers and associates	Close association with criminal others and relative isolation from antiriminal others; immediate social support for crime
Antisocial personality and temperamental factors	Adventurous, pleasure seeking, weak self-control, restlessly aggressive
Family/marital stressors	Two key elements are 1) nurturance and/or caring, and 2) monitoring and/or supervision
Substance abuse	Abuse of alcohol and/or other drugs
Lack of education, employment stability or achievement	Low levels of performance and satisfaction in school and/or work
Lack of pro-social activities in leisure time	Low levels of involvement and satisfaction in antiriminal leisure pursuits

Criminogenic Need Factors

Fancy (and expensive!) assessments, algorithms, and programming have been built to disregard the attributes, characteristics, and qualities they say criminals lack, which include building capabilities, perspective change, prosocial studies, engagements (such as mentoring), ownership, self-determination, critical thinking, and commitment to community. We want our nation's citizens — as parents, employees, friends, and community members — to embrace these empowering and liberating qualities; and incarcerated people would like to

Higher Education in Prison with three men; two of whom I had met several times in the same prison and had been released; and one I met in a different prison and was still incarcerated. We wanted to find out if the academic attendees would help us think about how we could switch the reentry goal from being a negative one (reducing recidivism) to a positive one (building a satisfying and successful life) since it is far easier (and much more sensible!) to pursue a positive goal.

was a little harder to get started, but he assured me that once I got the hang of it — like driving with a manual transmission — it would become easy.

I wasn't ready for it when he offered, but I very much liked the idea of the operating system and how it was created. It reminded me of what I was doing with Fair Shake. Fair Shake, too, was a little harder, and people had to "do it themselves," but in the end they would be more informed, and Fair Shake would continue to become more relevant and supportive. I promised to look it up later.

Later came hard. It was when I was being forced to abandon Windows XP, which I loved so much, that I decided I'd had enough; it was time to try Ubuntu. I searched online to download it and the search results provided not only the computer operating system, but more importantly, they provided a link to a vital philosophy for our human operating system!

I was like a kid in a candy store as I explored the information online about Ubuntu! I was so excited to read and hear and learn about this traditional, sub-Saharan African philosophy, founded on the idea of interdependence. Ubuntu can be understood through the Zulu maxim, "umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu," or "a person is a person through other persons." It means, according to Desmond Tutu (2015), that it is the very essence of being human that we belong in a bundle of life, and that the solitary individual is a contradiction in terms.

I couldn't believe my eyes. I recognized this as Fair Shake's operating system and since then I have been weaving the philosophy into all of the information I share. I also close the newsletter with "Ubuntu" to remind the subscribers that we are in this together.

Education for Democracy

Understanding and effectively running a large democracy is an enormous undertaking and proper preparation should begin at an early age. We must nurture care in our youth and demonstrate ways they can think about themselves as individuals-within-community. Their education must include how to express — and listen to — a wide variety of perspectives in problem-solving debates about how to achieve social goals. It will take all of the formative years of schooling to develop these crucial and necessary thinking, reflection, communication, and feeling skills.

Rather than provide powerful tools for ownership, engagement, and intellectual expansion in a vibrant democracy, however, today's foundational pedagogy, with its attendant testing and comparisons, conditions our children to passively receive and believe information. The unspoken argument (unless you ask, like I always have) is that if we just rely on experts, follow the rules, and pursue employment, we will create the means to achieve happiness, security, and satisfaction in our lives.

We need not look further than the front page of the newspaper on any given day to see the devastating suffering and failure of this approach: increased polarization and authoritarianism across civil society, increased mental illness, suicide, anxiety, depression, addiction and opiate use in individuals; and the enormous loss of meaning and control in our lives.

Our citizens are waiting for a courageous and benevolent leader to do the heavy lifting of leading civil society. We want to believe that reform is happening and that infusing money into bad systems is making them better. We are waiting for the white knight to come and save us, but we can't yet see her on the horizon. The education system we count on to properly prepare our youth to recognize and solve social, regional, and global problems is failing our

future leaders by withholding the very tools they must use to develop their capabilities, at our nation's collective peril.

In 2007, just one month after receiving my bachelor's degree (at 44 years of age), I read an article in the *Journal of Correctional Education* that offered a new lens for me to use as I think about "correctional education." In it the author, Cormac Behan (2007), argued: "[T]he current penal orthodoxy must be challenged and alternative discourses explored within and without of correctional settings" (p. 158). I agreed! I read on, and found myself weaving these considerations into my perspective:

Educators need to create an alternative discourse about how we define our progress. It could shift the focus of the argument from a defensive position to a positive one. This might be achieved by arguing for a different approach to education than what the prison authorities or politicians may want. Mezirow's theory of Transformative Learning has a lot to offer prison educators. It encourages individuals to challenge the way they make meaning in the world. This requires transforming frames of reference which begins with critical reflection, i.e., assessing one's assumptions and presuppositions. It begins with encouraging students to engage in critical thinking which, according to Stephen Brookfield, is what one should strive for in an adult education process. ...This is the beginning of liberating learning. (Behan, 2007, p. 160)

I had just finished school, but I wanted to head straight back to the library to find out more about transformative learning theory! After all, wouldn't we all benefit from taking the time to think critically, reflect, question our assumptions, biases and beliefs, and discuss our thoughts with others?

After 10 years of self-study, I gathered all my savings and returned to school to pursue a master's degree in education. I needed to learn about education theory, curriculum-building and evaluation, so I could build a place where all people — regardless of their educational attainment or relationship — could freely learn how to learn. We have the right, as citizens and humans, to know how to think deeply, how to find information that is not offered through the “news,” to consider other perspectives, build agency, and expand our capacity for complexity, caring, and knowledge. We deserve to have a place to break free from the limitations of other people's educational norms, goals and expectations, and think outside of the social or tribal bubble. A place where learners of any age and any educational attainment level could continue freely on their personal path of acquiring wisdom.

Where I once thought a certificate was the answer, I grew to understand that employers et al. were understandably cynical about the value of certificates that cannot show commitment, moral fortitude, team building or critical thinking. They want to judge the person for themselves, which makes sense. After all, a driver's license does not verify a willingness to use turn signals, only that the driver knows how to use them.

It takes courage to face an employer in an interview following many years of incarceration. It also takes courage to say “no” to a powerfully persuasive family member or close friend. It takes great bravery to do the right thing when our group is doing the wrong thing. We can muster the strength that we need to create good boundaries, expand our capabilities, and reduce our suffering. From there, we can feel strong enough to reach out to help others and discover that helping them helps us even more. No certificate shows this level of growth, determination, or commitment.

I was extremely fortunate to have been diverted from dropping out of school to finding a reason to love learning. In the halls of Walden III, at the age of 16, I was able to experience the process and value of transformative learning. I am deeply grateful and, like many believers, I feel a responsibility to offer this opportunity to others.

The Fair Shake Free School

So now, while I am not able to get into the prisons to talk with people face-to-face, but while the interest rises in newsletter subscriptions, creating think tanks, exploring biases, and more, I am pushing the creative side of my mind to its limits (which will, thankfully, expand even more) to figure out how one person can maintain and even build a lifelong learning “community center” that not only offers information, but asks visitors to contribute.

The Fair Shake Free School will more deeply investigate these areas:

- Philosophy — to explore epistemology, purpose, morality, care for humanity, values, etc.
- Psychology — to explore the feeling/thinking problem, our needs and wants, uniqueness, dropping unwanted baggage, motivation, etc.
- Sociology — to explore TV and media and its impacts, how authority impacts groups, how being in groups impacts individuals, etc.
- Citizenship — building community and capabilities together, education, democracy, global village, etc.
- “Swellness” — where our physical health meets our mental health.

We now live in a world of constant change; where lifelong learning is no longer just a good idea, it is vital for security, satisfaction, meaning-making, and building trust.

Fair Shake will not engage in top-down pedagogy but will, instead, rely on a learning foundation based in

heutagogy (self-determined learning), ubuntu (teaching and learning undergirded by humanity toward others), and transformative learning theory (critical reflection and potential for perspective change).

Looking through the heutagogical lens (Glassner & Back, 2020), learners will understand that they are the captains of their learning adventure and they will “make the road by walking” (Machado, 1912). They will learn how they can discern the value of the information they entertain, ask relevant questions for proper reflection, and construct knowledge to build their life to its fullest.

By applying the lens of ubuntu (Bangura, 2005), learners will be able to think deeply about what is at the core of being a human: relationship! They will be able to remember that we learned how to be human from other humans, and that we can build information in a way that honors, accepts, and encourages others. Ubuntu is such an important philosophy for democracy that, in 1997, the South African Department of Welfare stated that Ubuntu “acknowledges both the rights and the responsibilities of every citizen in promoting individual and societal well-being” (p. 12).

Finally, the transformative learning lens (Mezirow, 1990) will equip learners with ways to foster critical self-reflection, challenge social norms, engage in dialog with greater confidence, and consider other perspectives, including changing our own. These tools will support compassion as well as capacity-building in a world of constant change and emerging truth.

Our Opportunity

Let us think again about those who are stuck in the building:

The monolith of correctional bureaucracy and its supporters — the current managers of the building — have no incentive or desire to improve their performance. In accordance with

our current contract, they can keep us out, but they cannot stop us from reaching in to connect, to listen, and to share time, learning opportunities, and humanity. They can also not stop us from changing our contract with them in the future.

We can change the building; for instance, we can create a campus with choices. We can continue to include limitations and restrictions, while we also include decency, respect, and opportunities. We can remind those inside that we know they are bringing unique and important contributions to our communities.

The management of the building, and the welfare of those being held within it, is OUR business; we have a right and a duty to build possibilities with our fellow citizens. As we now properly recognize ourselves as the owners, and see our neighbors inside as co-creators, we can experiment with new ways of thinking about how to help them prepare to leave the building and find success in our dynamic, technology-based world.

Remember, more than 1,600 of our fellow citizens will walk out of those doors full of hope and determination each day. With our eyes and hearts open, I am certain that we can switch the 83% failure rate to an 83% success rate.

What works to improve reentry success? We do. Together.

Notes

- ¹ Walden III, Racine, Wisconsin: <https://www.rusd.org/district/walden-iii-middle-high-school>
- ² Fair Shake website: <https://www.fairshake.net/>.
- ³ Fair Shake Reentry Packet: <https://www.fairshake.net/reentry-resources/reentry-packet/>.
- ⁴ If you'd like to learn about the philosophy behind the bubbles, please check out the "On Sue's

Desk" page of the website and scroll down until you see Bubble Truck Philosophy (<https://www.fairshake.net/suesdesk/>).

- ⁵ To see the survey that the Federal Bureau of Prisons use to assess the "risk of recidivism," please find the Measures of Criminal Attitudes and Associates (MCAA) survey on the Fair Shake website: (<https://www.fairshake.net/risk-assessments/>), or on the Research and Practice in Corrections Lab website: https://sites.google.com/a/siu.edu/corrections-and-research_lab/Downloads. See the "Measures of Criminal Attitudes and Associates (MCAA)" questionnaire (please scroll down to find it) and the "Measures of Criminal and Antisocial Desistance (MCAD)" survey — worth a moment while you're there!

References

- Alper, M., Durose, M. R., & Markman, J. (2018, May 23). 2018 update on prisoner recidivism: A 9-Year follow-up period (2005–2014). Retrieved from <https://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=pbdetail&iid=6266>
- Bangura, A. K. (2005). Ubuntugogy: An African educational paradigm that transcends pedagogy, andragogy, ergonagy and heutagogy. *Journal of Third World Studies*, 22(2), 13–53.
- Behan, C. (2007). Context, creativity and critical reflection: Education in correctional institutions. *Journal of Correctional Education*, 58(2), 157–169.
- Carson, E. A. (2020). Prisoners in 2018. Retrieved from <https://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=pbdetail&iid=6846>
- Cialdini, R. B. (1984). *Influence: The psychology of persuasion*. New York, NY: Harper Business.
- Glassner, A, & Back, S. (2020). *Exploring heutagogy in higher education: Academia meets the zeitgeist*. Singapore, Asia: Springer.
- Hughes, T., & Wilson, D. J. (2020). Reentry trends in the U.S. Retrieved from <https://www.bjs.gov/content/reentry/reentry.cfm>
- Machado, A. (1912). *Campos de castilla*. Madrid, Spain: Ediciones Cátedra.
- Martinson, R. (1974). *What works? — Questions and answers about prison reform*. Retrieved from <https://www.nationalaffairs.com/storage/app/uploads/public/58e1a4/ba7/58e1a4ba7354b822028275.pdf>
- Mezirow, J. (1990). *Fostering critical reflection in adulthood*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- National Institution of Justice. (2012, January). *Lessons learned from 30 years of prison programs*. Retrieved from <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/239775.pdf>
- National Parole Resource Center. (2014). Action guide series: Use of valid actuarial assessments of risk and needs: Understanding the evidence and its implications for using risk and needs assessment tools. Retrieved from <https://nationalparoleresourcecenter.org/action-guide-use-of-valid-actuarial-assessments-of-risks-and-needs/determining-risk-of-recidivism.htm>
- Republic of South Africa Department of Welfare. (1997). *White paper for social welfare*. Retrieved from <http://www.kzndsd.gov.za/Documents/2015/August/documents/WhitePaperforSocialWelfare1997.pdf>
- Sawyer, W. (2017, April 10). How much do incarcerated people earn in each state? Retrieved from <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2017/04/10/wages/>
- Tutu, D. (2015, October 6). Striving for Ubuntu. Retrieved from <http://www.tutufoundationusa.org/2015/10/06/striving-for-ubuntu/>

Citizenship - Legal Assistance

2050 S Broadway Suite G
Santa Maria, CA 93454
(805) 922-4564

California Rural Legal Assistance, Inc. (CRLA) is a nonprofit law firm serving low-income residents of California's rural areas and small cities.

<https://crla.org/locations>

Food - Food Pantry

We represent 41 food banks throughout the state.
<https://www.cafoodbanks.org/our-members/>

Free - Free Phone

Assurance Wireless
P.O. Box 5040
Charleston, IL 61920-9907
1-888-321-5880

Assurance Wireless provides eligible consumers with free monthly data, unlimited texting, free monthly minutes plus a free Smartphone. Lifeline enrollment is available to individuals who qualify based on federal or state-specific eligibility criteria. Residents of homeless shelters, nursing homes and temporary addresses may also be eligible.

<https://www.assurancewireless.com/lifeline-services/what-lifeline>

Citizenship - Legal Assistance

301 S. Miller Street, Ste. 116
Santa Maria, 93454
Phone: 805-922-9909

Fax: 805-347-4494

<http://www.lafsbcb.org/>

Food - Food Pantry

A list of Food banks and food resources throughout CA and a list of volunteer opportunities.

<http://www.cafoodbanks.org/>

<http://www.cafoodbanks.org/>